UNITED STATES KARATE ALLIANCE

BUSHIDO BULLETIN

January 2003 Volume 13 Issue 1

Directors: James H. Hawkes & Dr. David Jordan

WHAT'S NEW AT THIS YEAR'S USKA NATIONALS & ANNUAL SEMINAR?

The 2003 US Karate Alliance Nationals and Annual Seminar are fast approaching. As you can imagine, with less than three months to go, the Alliance headquarters are humming as we prepare for Nationals.

The Alliance Annual Seminars will be held on Sunday, April 6th, beginning at 9:00 am. The seminars are "working" seminars, so be sure to attend in your traditional karate uniform, "gi." Each seminar is geared toward all ages and any level of martial artist, so set this time aside for special training.

This year, we are again honored to have **Fumio Demura** conduct a seminar and do a demonstration during the Alliance Nationals. Demura Sensei's seminar is scheduled for 10:30 am on the "Necessities of Kata Performance." You won't want to miss this chance to train with one of the karate world's exceptional practitioners.

Bruce and Ann-Marie Heilman, Okinawa Kenpo Kobudo practitioners, will be conducting two seminars. The first one, beginning at 12:30 pm, will focus on long weapons like the bo and Eiku, and the second one, beginning at 2:00 pm, will focus on short weapons like the tunfa, sai, and kama. This is a good time to be introduced to a new weapon, as well as to fine tune manipulation and application.

John Pat Bullock, seven-time USKA National Kumite Grand Champion, and four-time USKA World Kumite Grand Champion, will be teaching a seminar on Effective Sparring Techniques. He will be focusing on "Kicking with Movement," during his seminar which begins at 9:00 am. Mr. Bullock, known for his innate sense of timing which makes it difficult for opponents to overcome, will also be sharing some of his effective sparring drills.

Chanbara, padded weapons sparring, is a popular event at many Alliance tournaments. Competitors of all ages enjoy the competition. **Tim VanDenover**, Director of the Chanbara Federation, will lead a seminar on Effective Chanbara Techniques. The seminar will start at 3:30 pm, and Chanbara equipment will be provided.

The Alliance Rules and Referee Seminar will be held at 2:30 pm on Friday afternoon. This seminar is not only geared for Referee and Judge's certification, but also for those just wanting to learn more about the Alliance rules and judging. **Lee Kittell**, the Alliance Chief Referee, will be conducting the seminar. The Score Keepers and Time Keepers Seminar will coincide with the Rules Seminar.

Forms, Sparring, and Weapons divisions, the Alliance core divisions, will feature the "Best of the Best" at the Alliance Nationals. The competitors in these divisions have had to qualify to compete by placing 1st through 4th at a Nationals-Qualifying Event. There are still a number of qualifying tournaments coming up before Nationals, so check your tournament schedule for one near you. Don't forget about the Last Chance Qualifier Tournament held on Friday, April 4th at 9:30 am.

Koshiki, Chanbara, and Team Kata competition will begin at 5:30 pm on Friday, April 4th. These divisions are open to all martial artists, and do not require pre-qualification. Most of the Koshiki and Chanbara Divisions offered have been further divided due to popular demand, by male and female, or by beginning and advanced, so check out the National Registration Form for your division.

The official hotel and tournament site for the 2003 Alliance Nationals and Annual Seminar is the newly renovated Albuquerque Marriott Pyramid North (formerly the Crowne Plaza Pyramid Hotel). Enjoy your stay at the Marriott, and the convenience of having the tournament right in the hotel. Call the Marriott at (505) 821-3333 to make your reservation and receive your special rate by mentioning the US Karate Alliance Nationals.

Discounted rates are available on Southwest Airline Flights and Alamo Rent A Car. The special discount codes and contact numbers can be found in the Nationals Flyer.

We are looking forward to seeing you all April 3-6, 2003 in Albuquerque, New Mexico, for the 2003 US Karate Alliance Nationals and Annual Seminar. Enjoy our Southwestern Hospitality – *Bienvenidos a Albuquerque!* (Welcome to Albuquerque!)

KARATE HELPS WOMAN CONQUER CANCER

by Rick Nathanson, 7th Dan

Melissa Lucero celebrated Christmas this year at her home in Los Lunas, New Mexico. This seemingly inconsequential fact is actually quite important. Last year at this time, she was too sick to

coordinate and host holiday festivities, so she and her family observed Christmas at the home of her grandmother.

This past Christmas, however, Lucero, 27, truly had reason to celebrate. She has been cancer free for a year. And while the role of medical science can't be dismissed in her recovery, neither can the importance of karate, which strengthened her resolve to heal herself.

"My saving grace was my family, my friends, my faith and my karate," said Lucero, a brown belt under Richard and Cindy Long at Belen Goju Ryu in New Mexico. "Karate helped me mentally and physically to keep going. It was something I needed to do and it made me feel better just knowing that I was being active." And being active was important, "because it kept my mind clear and forced me to focus on something other then being sick."

Lucero, however, a wife to husband Daniel, and mother of daughter Keshia, now 10, and son Dakotah, now 6, was very sick for a while, and there was no getting around that.

When she first noticed the lump on her neck, she assumed she had simply pulled a muscle and it would go away. When it didn't, she went to see a doctor, "hoping it was nothing, but worrying it might be something," she said.

She had reason to worry. In May of 2001, several weeks after first

The cancer had advanced to stage two, meaning it had spread to her neck, chest and under an arm. Luckily, the cancer was confined to lymph nodes and had not spread to any major organs. Even luckier, it had a very high cure rate, but getting there would not be easy.

"They did surgery to remove tissue in my throat, and then they did chemotherapy," Lucero said. "I had chemo once every other week, four to six hours each session. I did that for six months. The surgery was nothing compared to the chemo. I wouldn't wish it on my worst enemy."

With each chemo session, Lucero became progressively more ill, experiencing such unpleasantries as vomiting, intense headaches, alternating bouts of constipation or diarrhea, loss of appetite, generalized body aches, and extreme exhaustion coupled with an inability to sleep.

Lucero was pretty much bed bound during the week immediately following treatment, but she forced herself into the dojo on the alternate weeks, sometimes, she said, when she was too weak and ill to do anything.

"Everybody at the dojo helped in some way or another," she said. "They would take care of the kids, make dinner, get me a ride to the doctor or to karate class. Anything I needed, they were always there for me. They are like my second family."

Gradually, with the encouragement of her senseis,

Lucero forced herself to participate more and more.

"It's so hard for someone to come back from something like that," said Richard Long. "Even when she was done with the chemo, it wasn't really over. Chemo kills the metabolism, so you're not eating and you get depressed. I got strict with her one day when it looked like she was starting to fall away. I said, 'look, this isn't going to happen in a hurry.' So we got her coming to the aerobics program in addition to karate and within months she was coming around and feeling better."

Added Cindy Long, "karate gave Melissa something to focus on other than her cancer. The training was good for her, and she had goals, one of which was to be feeling well enough to compete at State Championships in 2001."

In November of that year, Lucero was still fighting the effects of her illness; nevertheless, she not only competed in the New Mexico State Championships, but she took home a First Place trophy in kata, a Second Place in kumite and a Third Place in kobudo.

Lucero initially began studying karate because her husband and daughter were doing it. "I saw them doing it and thought it looked like something I could do," she said. "So I tried it and I was hooked." Although her husband and daughter have not stuck with it, Lucero made it her own.

"It was challenging and made me feel empowered. It made me feel comfortable to be alone when my husband wasn't there. I was confident I could protect myself and my family."

While Lucero has competed in many tournaments and enjoys the experience, that is not her main reason for studying karate. "I do karate for me," she explained. "I want to improve and see how far I can take it. I want to know more and understand what I'm doing. Instead of just running a kata, I want to know the bunkai. I want to understand what I can get out of my forms."

In fact, the lessons Lucero has learned from her karate thus far are more important than the technical side of punching and kicking, or the choreography of kata. Karate has taught her about life.

"Being in karate taught me that I'm strong enough mentally, physically and emotionally to get through things. There are always obstacles in life and you have to learn from them and improve yourself. Every experience in life can teach you something. I've always been a fighter and having had cancer just made me stronger and put my life in perspective and helped me to realize what's important. For me, it's my family, my faith, my health and my karate."

Lucero, a computer Web page designer who works out of her home, is averaging about three karate workouts a week and another two or three aerobic exercise classes at the dojo.

"We're extremely proud of her," said her sensei, Richard Long. "She's overcome great hardship and difficulty. It's very rewarding for us as instructors. It's what we teach and what karate is all about. "Of course, we didn't do it for her. She's done the work."